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ABSTRACT

Current theory and law support a comprehensive model of school reform. The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program suggests that changes in isolated parts of a system may not be linked to increases in overall achievement. A comprehensive reform program must synthesize nine essential components to improve the whole system across all the stages of reform, including adoption, initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. Successful plans employ innovative, research-based strategies and methods to enhance student learning, teaching, and school management, and to incorporate comprehensive designs in school functioning, instruction, assessment, management, and professional development. Comprehensive reform requires effective professional development programs, and includes measurable goals and performance benchmarks for student achievement. Support for reform in schools requires nurturing student, teacher, and administrator growth and involvement. Research on parental involvement suggests reforms should encourage a more substantial level of communication and engagement than in the past. Comprehensive programs utilize high-quality external support from such entities as universities with experience in schoolwide reforms and improvement. Effective reform demands adequate evaluation strategies and data collection. Meeting all the challenges posed by comprehensive school development and reform requires the coordination of material and human resources. (Discussion of each component includes a brief list of references.) (TEJ)

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UCR An In-Depth Look at Nine Essential Components

UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSIVE REFORM

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UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSIVE REFORM

Foreword

Theories and hypotheses abound about how to improve schools. Current theory and law support a comprehensive model of school development and reform with a broader scope than the previous mastery-learning, competency-based, skill-based, and improve-the-parts models. Business and education leaders now believe that while improving individual parts of a system may be effective for those parts, isolated improvements do not necessarily lead to an increase of overall achievement. System planners generally see this as the difference between analysis (how the parts work separately) and synthesis (how the parts work together). Comprehensive school reform does not ignore the individual parts of the system but focuses on synthesis: improvement of the whole by aligning the parts toward a common goal. This series of articles, *Understanding Comprehensive Reform: An In-Depth Look at Nine Essential Components*, attends to the dual needs of analysis and synthesis and aids in providing understanding about the need for, the promise of, and the use of the nine essential components in increasing the effectiveness of our schools.

After identifying their needs for improvement, schools explore alternate programs or practices to address these needs. Solutions may come from published reform models, or the school may design its own program. The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program, on which this series of web articles are based, suggests a combination of both approaches. The resulting school improvement/change process is typically thought of as comprising several stages:

- **Adoption**—Identifying the solution
- **Initiation**—Mobilizing all relevant persons to become involved
- **Implementation**—Shepherding the new program into the school and classrooms

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- **Institutionalization**—Maintaining momentum and securing the program into its permanent place in the school (or until new practices are designed to take the current program's place)

While these stages may be stated rather glibly, doing them is complex and difficult. Implementation is often given short shrift and lack of adequate attention. This lack of attention is epitomized in the approach of those who mandate new programs and policies. This approach assumes that the adoption of a new program is routinely followed by student gains. The graphic below illustrates this "giant-leap" mentality.

Adoption of New Program	> > > > > >	Student Results

The empty chasm in the middle represents the implementation stage in the school reform process and what is typically provided for its success—not much. Yet the process of school improvement is grounded in the assumption that there will be change, requiring people to change from what they've been doing to new behaviors. The crux of the matter is in the implementation*in the learning of new skills by teachers and all others involved in using or supporting the new program. We can map this process in this way:

Teachers' Learning	> = Teachers' Change of Knowledge, Skills, Behaviors	> = School Improvement	> = Increased Student Results

Fortunately, there is a large knowledge base that can inform the implementation stage of the reform process. Research studies have given keen attention to this stage and the strategies for guiding and supporting the process of change. Strategies include articulating a clear vision of the adopted program implemented in classrooms in a high-quality way, planning and providing resources for executing the plan, investing in professional development to reach the vision of changed practice, monitoring progress, providing assistance, and creating a context conducive to change. The goal is to help the implementers as they go about learning how to use new programs in their classrooms with their students for the benefit of the students' successful learning.

Understanding Comprehensive Reform: An In-Depth Look at Nine Essential Components elaborates on these research-based strategies and is an excellent school-improvement resource. The articles can assist school planners in arriving at helpful answers to complex questions surrounding comprehensive school reform and development.

Understanding Comprehensive Reform: An In-Depth Look at Nine Essential Components is written for front-line school improvement teams and those close to the action. It is also useful for policymakers, district- and state-level decision makers, and those who have the power to increase the financial support for both schools that receive funding to enable them to adopt national models and schools that have decided to build their own. Readers are encouraged to use this web publication as a tool to stimulate discussion and build the competence in those engaged in comprehensive school reform and development.

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UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSIVE REFORM

Component One: Effective, Research-Based Methods and Strategies

Component One

A comprehensive school reform program employs innovative strategies and proven methods for student learning, teaching, and school management that are based on reliable research and effective practices and have been replicated successfully in schools with diverse characteristics.

Introduction

The success of comprehensive school reform as a strategy for improved student achievement depends in part on whether a model has been developed on a scientific research base with reliable methodology. This section takes the reader through a process to assist school and district personnel in evaluating school reform programs.

Comparing Programs

A process of comparison and contrast is desirable when researching new programs for possible implementation. This could include gathering and documenting the information called for in Table 1 for each program considered.

The summary of data or research for item 13 in Table 1 might address the following questions:

- What evidence is there that this program increases student achievement? For which students? In which subject areas?
- How was achievement gain defined? Was there a minimum amount of instruction required for students

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and schools to be included?
- Were demographic characteristics of students similar to the demographics of this school?
- How were the project schools chosen to be included in the research study? Were there special training or implementation requirements for project schools? How were comparison schools chosen?
- Were school results not reported for some schools that participated in the project, and, if not, why not?
- Which features of the program reflect current studies on effective practices and educational issues?

Additional Links for Comparing Programs

- NWREL's Catalog School Reform Models
- NWREL's Model Key Features—Guiding Questions for Teachers
- SEDL's list of models

Researching the Research

The best evidence of a model's effectiveness would include data obtained using only the most rigorous and professionally acceptable research and evaluation approaches or methods. However, in developing or considering models to use as the basis for comprehensive reform programs, schools, districts, and states often have had only the evidence provided by the reform models. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, wide-ranging and in-depth information is not available for many of the models. One of the reasons is that consensus has yet to be established on the most appropriate instruments for measuring and comparing student achievement. Another reason is that it is difficult and expensive to conduct long-term, systematic research across multiple sites using rigorous experimental/control group research designs. It is expected that this problem will be alleviated in the near future partially due to the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program and the data it provides.

When considering the adoption of commercial programs, the school staff should obtain information from sources other than the developers to ensure objectivity. Information is available from state departments of education, Regional Educational Laboratories, and other technical assistance centers. Additionally, staff may wish to contact schools currently using models in which they are interested to gain

a perspective on the model in practice. In its guidance on selecting comprehensive school reform models, the U.S. Department of Education provides the following categories of research:

The theoretical (basic) or research foundation for the program: Theories or research findings explain why a comprehensive model and the practices included in the model work together to produce gains in student performance.

Evaluation-based evidence of improvements in student achievement: Evidence of educationally significant improvement is shown through reliable measures of student achievement in major subject areas before and after model implementation.

Evidence of effective implementation: Implementation is a description of what it takes to make the model fully operational in schools.

Evidence of Replicability: Replicability means that the model has been successfully implemented in more than one school.

Additional links for researching the research

- Thomas B. Fordham Foundation's *Better by Design? A Consumer's Guide to Schoolwide Reform*
- LSS's *What Do We Know: Widely Implemented School Improvement Programs*
- AFT's *What Works: Six Promising Schoolwide Reform Programs*
- American Institutes for Research's *An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform*
- National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students' *Tools for Schools: School Reform Models Supported by the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students*

Table 2 from the U.S. Department of Education Guidelines for the *CSRD Request for Grant Proposals*, provides a method for determining the quality of a description of a product's research base.

Assuring Quality

The Quality Assurance Checklist for a Program (Table 3)

incorporates the U.S. Department of Education's dimensions and provides criteria to identify the quality of the programs studied.

Additional resources for model selection

- NCREL's *Making Good Choices: A Guide for Schools and Districts*
- Charter Friends National Network's *If the Shoe Fits: A Guide for Charter Schools—Considering Adoption of a Comprehensive School Design*
- NCREL's *Comprehensive School Reform: Making Good Choices for Your School, Step 2: Selecting a Comprehensive School Reform Model*
- Guidelines for Ensuring the Quality of National Design-Based Assistance Providers

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Component Two: Comprehensive Design with Aligned Components

Comprehensive design with aligned components: The program has a comprehensive design for effective school functioning, including instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, and school management, that aligns the school's curriculum, technology, and professional development into a schoolwide reform plan designed to enable all students—including children from low-income families, children with limited English proficiency, and children with disabilities—to meet challenging State content and performance standards and addresses needs identified through a school needs assessment.

Introduction

Comprehensive school change can be compared to constructing a stone arch where the placement of every piece of stone is important. No one stone may be removed or neglected without consequence. But one special stone at the apex of the arch, known as the keystone, is the most critical. While each of the other stones supports those above it, the keystone exerts pressure down both sides and holds the entire arch together. Similarly, each of the nine components of comprehensive school reform is important in its own right; to neglect any component affects the entire plan. Component Two is the keystone, reminding us that all the components should be aligned.

According to Michael Fullan, "The greatest problem faced by school districts and schools is not resistance to innovation, but the fragmentation, overload, and incoherence resulting from the uncritical acceptance of too many different innovations." An Early Report from the Field counsels, "It is important for schools to understand the

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implementation of models as part of a coherent and broader reform plan," (6) not as a substitute for a schoolwide reform plan. This component illustrates a process for creating a broad and coherent plan, incorporating a selected comprehensive reform model. Using this process, a school staff can create a plan that supercedes all previous ones while meshing the best of what they are presently doing with new school and district strategies. "Comprehensive" and "focus" do not have to be mutually exclusive. The motto can be, "Think globally; act locally."

Why Comprehensive?

True comprehensive reform is about moving towards continual improvement from a broad-spectrum plan based on a needs assessment and aligned with local and state standards. All components of the plan are aligned to support each other in pursuit of school goals. Teachers, administrators, and others in the school community understand the plan as a roadmap for change in the way they do business. This change in thinking, conducting classes, and running schools requires professional development as an ongoing system of inquiry, discussion, and support across and among the school staff (see Component 7). One of the major goals of the professional development is how to reallocate resources, both internal and external. This is a shift from the notion of improvement as a result of a new textbook or a classroom set of high-tech equipment.

In traditional, piecemeal change, the improvement process looks like this:

Focusing on	Schools hope to get
Standards OR Goals OR Benchmarks OR a Specific Strategy	Higher Quality Student Learning

Comprehensive reform calls for a multi-step process:

Focusing on	To change	And change	And change	For
Standards aligned with Goals	Curriculum	Instruction	Teacher	Higher Quality

aligned with Benchmarks			Behaviors	Student Learning

In order to effect positive, lasting change, every new strategy is reviewed in terms of its alignment in the overall plan and its expected impact on adult behavior in light of the ultimate and most important intended result: higher quality student learning.

A Plan for Creating a Plan

It is often good to look at why something did not work in order to see what to do next time. Tables 1-4 can assist in studying previous and current plans in order to determine what to retain, what to abandon, and gaps to be addressed. This activity is directed toward formative evaluation as discussed in Component 8.

1. A staff committee might begin using its own data by completing Table 1.
2. Results from Table 1 provide the information needed for Table 2.
3. Elements ending up in categories A and B of Table 2 are placed in Column 1 of Table 3.
4. Everything in Category C of Table 2 belongs in either Column 2 or 3 of Table 3. Reminder: placement is based on data, not opinion.
5. The information in Table 2, Column D is further researched using an action plan like Table 4.

Staff-researchers completing Table 4 are looking for the following sorts of information to learn why the reform was not implemented and if the sameobstacles stymie many of the school's improvement efforts:

- Is the failure due to a lack of follow-through, a lack of time, a lack of other resources?
- Do initiatives begin well but falter as interest fades? (implementation dip)
- Is there cross-school representation on committees?
- Are committees diverse in other sorts of ways? For instance, a technology plan needs technophobes as well as technophiles.
- Is there a mechanism for pulling in the community? District staff?

The assessment of previous efforts puts a school in a

position to

- get around barriers that have stopped previous efforts
- mesh new strategies with old—and successful—strategies
- build a comprehensive plan

The next step is to create a checklist of components that should be included.

Horizontal Alignment

Focus on Student Learning
School Goals
Benchmarks
Classroom Strategies
Professional Development
School Governance
Curriculum
Instruction
Assessment
Technology
Allocation of Resources
External Technical Assistance
Monitoring and Evaluation

Aligning technology, professional development, and school governance with strategies addressing curriculum and instruction across a school means a multi-year commitment focusing time, money, and energy on only the endeavors in the comprehensive plan. This means sometimes saying "No." For example, the desire to purchase computer hardware and software in year three will be weighed against how its use will dovetail with specific curriculum and instructional strategies outlined in the plan. Likewise, new professional development from the district will be scrutinized for its fit with stated goals and strategies.

This does not preclude flexibility; a good comprehensive plan is organic, a natural, evolving process. It is a blueprint, not a mandate (Johnson & McDonald 284). The key is for all staff to remain focused on the one plan. Everything is measured against where individual staff members are on a continuum of implementation. Nothing new is started unless the staff has the time and energy to succeed and is ready to implement the innovation. Everyone remains focused on strategies that are clearly aligned with the overall goals. The various stages of implementation are

- Awareness
- Selection
- Initiation
- Implementation
- Evaluation
- Institutionalization

A school seeking reform is like a sailboat. Horizontal alignment of the components is similar to the actions required for sailing. Working the lines, letting the sails in and out, and steering with the keel all in unison are necessary to stay the course. Although at times the boat may not be pointed directly at the target and must tack from left to right, it is always headed generally toward the same ultimate goal. In a calm sea (political stability) with a good breeze (plenty of resources and external assistance), staff can focus on aligning all the activities to sail the boat quickly to its destination (high quality student learning). Political stability is rare, however. How does a school weather less-than-calm seas? Less-than-calm seas require adherence to vertical alignment.

Vertical Alignment

National Goals
Federal Requirements
State Standards and Accountability Systems
State Mandates
District Goals
District Curriculum
District Mandates
School Vision, Mission, & Goals
Grade-Level and/or Subject-Level Curriculum
Teaching and Learning in the Classroom

Vertical alignment makes it possible to sail calm or turbulent waters. A school staff takes into account not only the sails and lines, but also to external forces: wind, waves, and shallows. Shifts in politics at the national, state, and local level can bring new district or state accountability systems, high stakes tests, and mandated curricula. A school's horizontal alignment can either work with or against outside forces, with the wind or against. How does a school prepare for the voyage?

District officials are critical to the success of a school's plan and model. They can be invaluable for understanding and meeting outside requirements and in securing waivers when necessary. They can bring supplementary resources

to the school. In short, fully supportive of reform efforts, they would be the most important and best of allies. U.S. Department of Education researchers stress, "The issue of 'matching' is not only about the relationship between schools and their chosen reform models. As important is the fit between the school's plan for reform and district and state priorities."

However, it is not as simple as it might seem. For example, the comprehensive reform models call for changes that require autonomy at the school level. For instance, the Modern Red Schoolhouse says, "Schools...should be free to choose the services provided by districts and state offices" (149). Another, the Los Angeles Learning Community, states that educators along with students and parents will "have the opportunity, authority and responsibility for making instructional and governance decisions (including budget)..." (Johnson and McDonald 262). Spokespeople for a third model say, "Expeditionary Learning seeks to place the locus of control for decision making and action as close to the work of teaching and learning as possible" (Campbell et al. 129).

Yet according to researchers, autonomy remains a difficult challenge, mostly because it is a new concept for principals and district leaders. One comprehensive reform model's design team reports, "Even when there was strong support at the district level, neither district administrators nor school administrators comprehended the full implications of what autonomy could and should be" (Heady and Kilgore 149).

Researchers say that comprehensive reform begins at the central office. It brings a need for training in shifting roles (Asayesh). It is a move toward shared control, from directing to supporting; "The primary functions of central office administrators and staff developers will shift from initiation and organization to support and facilitation at the school site" (Middleton et al. 11). A school staff might want to ask the following questions (and others like them) in order to prepare for the decisions they will need to make as implementation proceeds. The implementation of the comprehensive plan will look very different, depending on whether the answer to a question is "at the school level" or "at the district level."

- Where are staffing decisions made, that is, decisions on student-to-teacher ratios, the number of counselors, the number of support staff?
- Where are various budget decisions, including

personnel costs, made?
- How does the school routinely access funds for purchases of goods and services?
- Where are decisions made on staff development content and scheduling?

Schools need to define roles and get agreements in writing. And it takes more than written agreements; it takes deep understanding on everyone's part. One district formed a panel composed of central office and school-based administrators, teachers, and parents.

> "The Reform Panel reviews initiatives directed at the improvement of teaching and learning conditions in the district that require waivers from school board policy and/ or contract language. It authorizes the creation and modification of educational programs and recommends to the Board of Education waivers to board policy and contract language." (Middleton et al. 8)

The enthusiasm for transformation can only be sustained by close communication and continued shared learning. Just as school staffs commit to learning and changing to reach their goal of higher achievement for all students, so district staff can join in their planning, implementation, and learning. No one is exempt. As one design team puts it,

> "Teachers learn to work together in the same way that their students will learn and work together. Once they have grasped how effectively they can brainstorm, research, and implement a purpose together, they have taken a major step toward believing in empowering their students to do the same thing." (Cohen and Jordan 49)

Jim Meza of Accelerated Schools said, "I feel, personally, that the district role and state role is just as critical as the designer . . . . If we can build capacity at the state and district levels, too, we can begin a shared responsibility. If schools depend totally on the designer, schoolwide reform won't happen." (State Education Leader)

"Teachers, principals, and central offices need to have an emphasis on 'co-leadership.' Schoolwide implementation of instructional and curriculum initiatives are virtually impossible without facilitation and support from the district.

District offices not closely connected to teachers and schools are unable to create the conditions to support change." (Joyce et al.)

Conclusion

This Component outlines a process for using past improvement efforts as the basis for the all-inclusive plan that necessarily accompanies the initiation of any comprehensive reform model. The process builds on current strengths and makes use of the talents and expertise in a school and district. Delineation of the process includes a discussion of alignment, both horizontal—across a school—and vertical—from schoolhouse to White House. We also stress the importance of forming an alliance with district-level staff.

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UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSIVE REFORM

Component Three: Professional Development

The program provides high-quality and continual teacher and staff professional development and training.

Introduction

Professional development is a term applied to activities that help teachers and other members of a school staff learn, apply, and refine new skills and knowledge. It is a critical component of any comprehensive school reform plan. This section provides guidelines for planning, delivering, and evaluating professional development activities, and it describes how to structure professional development to create and sustain a culture in which teachers and school staff are involved collectively in continuous learning.

Driving Comprehensive School Reform

A comprehensive school reform effort involves making significant changes on a number of fronts, such as classroom practices and instructional strategies, how the school is organized, school governance, and values and beliefs. This section focuses on how to design, conduct, and evaluate professional development activities by using the following guidelines:

1. *Adults learn more effectively when they work as a team to solve a problem that represents a shared concern and when they are involved in planning how they will learn.*

    - Strong, effective implementation of new practices and higher motivation on the part of those involved in using the new practices will result when professional development

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- Is directed toward a job-related problem that represents a collective concern (Snyder, Brookfield)
- Involves participants in planning the activities (Little, *Teachers' Professional Development*)
- Encourages and supports collaborative approaches to solving the problem
- Provides support following the initial training (Joyce, Showers, *Student Achievement through Staff Development*)

A planning team might ask the following questions:

- What do our teachers and staff see as problems worth solving as they implement the model and our plan?
- How will teachers and staff be involved in planning the professional development activities necessary
- How will teachers and staff work together in these activities?

2. *Change is personal. It creates legitimate concerns for individuals and groups. The idea is to support* people *as they experience change rather than just supporting the change.*

Everyone involved in change experiences a range of concerns (Hord, et al.). The *support an individual needs varies* according to the type of stress he or she is experiencing. Early in the process of learning new ways of doing things, an individual will probably need straightforward information and reassurance that he or she is not alone in feeling apprehension. Later, that same person will want opportunities to connect with others who can work with him or her in a collaborative approach to solving problems. Providing the right kinds of support costs little but pays enormous dividends

A planning team may want to verify that a plan is in place for

- Providing information about this change up front

- Helping people deal with how the change will impact them personally
- Providing practical answers to "how-to" questions as they arise
- Determining how teachers will get feedback on how this change is impacting students
- Providing opportunities for teachers to work together so the desired impact of the change is multiplied

3. *Professional development can be structured in a variety of ways. Choosing the most effective structure means matching what you are trying to do with the strengths and weaknesses of the different structures or models.*

While the training model is the most familiar, there are at least four other good models of professional development, including

- Individually Guided
- Observation/Assessment
- Involvement in Curriculum Development or School Improvement Process
- Inquiry Model

If a reform model is selected, the model's design will suggest the preferred structure(s). If a school is using its own model, someone on the staff, a teacher or administrator, will be interested and knowledgeable enough to work through the process of matching desired outcomes to the different models of professional development. Resources helpful in this task are listed in the bibliography under the following names: *Sparks*, *Loucks-Horsley*, and *Collins*.

A planning team will ask

What are the desired outcomes of the professional development activities we are providing, and which structure is most effective in producing these types of outcomes?

The fourth guideline speaks to building a culture for continuous improvement.

4. *New practices are learned most effectively when the school becomes a professional learning community*

where everyone is committed to learning and to supporting others in their learning—where learning is a way of life.

A professional learning community stimulates ongoing, collective inquiry into teaching and learning. It involves everyone in highly visible learning experiences. Teachers, administrators, and staff members learn *from* each other, *with* each other, and *for* each other. When the faculty and staff are learning together they model lifelong learning for students. Students see significant adults putting a high priority on learning. Finally, being a part of a professional learning community improves the professional lives of teachers; it legitimizes change and makes it an accepted part of school life. For additional information on professional learning communities, see Roland Barth's article, "Educators as Learners: Creating a Professional Learning Community in Your School."

Those who are planning professional development as a part of the comprehensive plan should address this question:

How will we provide adequate time for teachers and others to participate in these professional development activities?

5. Professional development activities should be scheduled when teachers are fresh, not tired. Activities should be conducted in uninterrupted blocks and balanced between school days and non-student-contact days.

Teachers cannot be expected to conduct serious collective study and reflection concerning curriculum and instructional practices only at the end of a regular school day (Raywid). The energy needed to teach today's students leaves little in reserve. Time on professional development needs to be spent in uninterrupted blocks of substantial length. Some professional development activities can be conducted during the summer, but most should occur during the school year so teachers can immediately apply what they are learning.

Teachers themselves can come up with many

creative, no-cost ideas for using time efficiently so that small groups of teachers are freed from other duties to work on professional development. Engaging teachers in brainstorming or problem solving activities to generate new ways of using time can be an effective strategy.

For more information on finding time for professional development, see the Spring 1999 online version of the *Journal of Staff Development.*

6. *Continual assistance will be needed to support teachers as they put the new practices in place and begin to gain skill in using them.*

Providing ongoing support for professional development activities is crucial. Joyce and Showers report that without follow-up, only one teacher out of ten will be able to stick with a new strategy long enough to add it to his or her repertoire. But when coaching or some other type of continual assistance is provided, as high as 90 percent of those trained can achieve mastery of a new strategy.

The planning team might ask:

What kinds of ongoing support will be available to teachers as they begin using the new practices?

A number of examples are listed below.

Examples of Continual Assistance

I observed a teacher demonstrate the new strategy in his or her classroom.

The trainer or another "expert" was available for questions and follow-up sessions.

I worked with other teachers to collect and/or analyze information on how students were responding to the new strategy.

I collaborated with at least one other teacher in planning to use the new strategy.

Another teacher shared materials with me for use with this strategy.

A teacher gave me an idea for applying the new strategy in a new way or in a situation different from the ones used as examples in the training activity.

A teacher gave me an idea for using materials with the new strategy in a new way or in a situation different from the ones used as examples in the training activity.

Someone gave me encouragement and/or moral support related to my use of the new strategy.

Someone exerted pressure upon me to use the new strategy or to use it more effectively.

I engaged in problem solving related to the new strategy with other teachers.

Someone made me feel less anxious so I would keep trying the new strategy, even when things weren't going well.

Another teacher was very open in talking about his or her use of the new strategy.

Other teachers made me feel like we were "in this together" when it came to using the new strategy.

Planning and talking with other teachers about the new strategy made me think more objectively about my own use of the strategy.

I joined a study group to help myself and others implement this strategy.

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An In-Depth Look at Nine Essential Components

UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSIVE REFORM

Component Four: Measurable Goals and Benchmarks

A comprehensive school reform program has measurable goals for student performance tied to a state's challenging content and student performance standards, as those standards are implemented, and benchmarks for meeting the goals.

Introduction

Many schools have moved from being a collection of teachers doing their own thing to a true organization with a common understanding of purposes, goals for students, and strategies for getting students there. This section provides ideas for organizing a school around a clear framework for student progress and development driven by local, state, and national standards. It includes strategies that schools might incorporate in their comprehensive plan.

A publication of the National Research Council points out limitations of current thinking about accountability. The authors suggest that the assumption governing current state testing and accountability initiatives is as follows:

If states

- Define expectations for

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student performance (through publishing standards documents, educators can provide guidance on what students should know and be able to do)
- Administer tests that assess the most critical topics, instructional goals, or standards
- Implement consequences for school performance, rewarding high performing schools and targeting low performing schools for assistance

Then

- Students will learn at higher levels.

The authors point out that the missing piece in this test-driven approach to improvement is that many schools lack the internal capacity, not necessarily the will, to teach more effectively. Organizing instruction and assessment at the school and classroom level in the service of increasingly higher quality student learning is no small task. Some schools have been able to take on the challenge of higher standards for all students and realize significantly improved student outcomes. Others are taking a "grab bag" approach toward improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment, including some strategies that may be detrimental to students' long-term development (such as narrowing the curriculum—"teaching to the state tests," extensive test preparation and practice, and others).

The rewards and consequences for state test results tempt school leaders to become too narrowly focused on the short-term goal of increasing test scores

Patronis Elementary in the Bay District of Florida took the Florida Sunshine State Standards as the centerpiece for curriculum and assessment reform. The school's focus on standards and teacher-developed performance assessments aligned with the standards emerged from the vision of the principal. After several years at Patronis, the students have come to expect and demand meaningful assignments with clear purposes. They question busy work. They understand the idea of looking at exemplars to help them understand the quality of work expected of them. Patronis teachers understand that their units must be organized around standards. Teachers' favorite activities don't have a place unless they can be justified in terms of standards. Teachers understand that performance assessments must supplement traditional tests if students are to learn how reason, apply knowledge, and produce quality work.

The principal of Patronis Elementary says math is probably the subject area that has the farthest to go in becoming standards-based. "The idea of standards-based means that teachers choose and organize instructional materials around standards with the end in mind (ideally as assessed by performance tasks). The difficulty is that the textbook is a crutch for many teachers, and the development of performance assessments around which you can aim your instruction takes time (compared to the end-of-chapter tests available in texts)."

After several years of work on curriculum refinement and development of integrated units, the principal at Patronis Elementary started asking teachers to look at student work together. The principal commented, "The norm of working in isolation is a very strong one and it took me almost two years of effort to convince teachers to open up and let others see the kind of work students did in their classrooms and critique the work. It was hard for teachers to get past the feeling that critiques of student work were intended as finger pointing and blaming rather than as constructive analysis and sharing. Teachers have always displayed student work on walls and bulletin boards, but having conversations about why a student or students may have performed poorly is a much more difficult conversation."

while neglecting other important state standards outcomes that can't be tested on a one-hour state test. However, it is increasingly evident that quick fix strategies (e.g., intensive test practice) might work to get scores up for a few years, but scores will ultimately plateau without significant attention to the quality of teaching and learning experiences provided by teachers in the school. True accountability is as much improving the quality of instruction to better meet the needs of all students as it is about results on state tests.

Standards-Driven Comprehensive Reform

Studies of high performing schools indicate that school quality is a people process. It requires that teachers collaboratively implement a focused curriculum around clear goals for students and that teachers continually improve their instructional and assessment methods. Teachers design units and look at evidence of student learning together so that classrooms are deprivatized and teachers become learners in the sense of finding better ways to help all students be successful.

Standards-driven reform at the school level includes the following strategies:

1. Making sense of state and/or district standards documents and getting focused on what students need to be able to do as a result of their time in the school
2. Assessing student learning
3. Establishing a culture of internal accountability

(1.) Making Sense of National, State, and District Standards Documents to Improve the Quality of Classroom Instructional

At Patronis Elementary in Bay District, Florida, the principal describes her role as constantly keeping teachers focused on the desired student outcomes. Teachers know to talk in terms of which standards they are teaching to. The principal sees herself as lead-teacher, familiar with standards, curriculum, and classroom assessments.

Methods and Assessments

A school driven by state, district, and national standards spends time in grade-level or departmental team meetings reviewing and organizing standards into a guide for instructional planning. Teachers also examine student test data to learn what the data say about what students do and do not understand. They reflect on how their students perform in other areas (oral presentation skills, deep understanding of critically important concepts) not easily tested by traditional tests.

Resources for making sense of standards include the following:

- Designing Standards-Based Districts, Schools, and Classrooms by Robert Marzano and John Kendall
- Mapping the Big Picture (Integrating Curriculum and Assessment K-12) by Heidi Hayes
- Understanding by Design by Grant Wiggins

Teams of teachers might work on clumping content standards into clusters of manageable instructional units. They try to come to consensus on instructional goals, such as the depth of student understanding desired for high-priority topics. They work together in writing new or revised curriculum units (or purchase commercially available instructional materials or programs matching their priorities). They collaborate to pull into better focus a curriculum that has typically been a mile wide and an inch deep. All involved understand that developing a more coherent and rigorous curriculum will take time and expertise.

Being standards-based means going from an instructional approach that says,

"Here's the book—go teach" to one that says, "Here are the desired student outcomes—let's figure out how to use a range of instructional materials and assessments to get all students performing successfully."

One issue to keep in mind when mapping state or district standards onto the content and skills taught by teachers (which can be a first step in assessing alignment) is that objectives tested by a state test are a subset of the larger set of standards that are supposed to guide instructional planning. A single state test reflects only a small sample of all the topics, skills, and item types that could be on a test. Standards-based doesn't mean narrowing instruction and assessment in the classroom to mimic the content and format of the state test. Rather, it means organizing instruction and assessment in the classroom around a powerful set of topics, issues, essential questions, set of skills, etc. (with state, district, and national standards as guides).

The second issue is that state or district standards may be imperfect. Some collections of standards are so lengthy that they would produce superficial levels of understanding if teachers tried to teach to them all. Some documents have standards that are vague or unclear and need to be reworked into more meaningful goals for students. In some cases, the standards—as constructed at the state or district level—may not be easily understood by students and parents. Some schools translate the state or district standards into statements of expectations that students can understand (for example, starting statements of expectations with the words "I can" so that students are led into a self-assessment mode).

(2.) Assessing Student Learning

Working together to restructure and focus a curriculum takes time and good collective thinking as well as building teacher capacity to assess student learning. When done well, classroom assessment carefully aligned to clear instructional objectives can be a means of raising student motivation and achievement. The student assessment cycle is critical if students are to perform at higher levels. The cycle includes the following:

1. Setting clear instructional goals
2. Assigning purposeful, high-quality work
3. Establishing clear criteria that guide students in producing quality work
4. Providing feedback to students that helps them understand their mistakes
5. Using data to improve subsequent instruction

Conversations and information about these aspects of classroom assessment need to become a professional development priority. As indicated above, a vital aspect of the assessment process—the component perhaps least used by teachers—is the use of data (student responses) to inform changes in instruction. Teachers can't assume students are learning or growing in their skills and knowledge just because the content or skill was taught or covered. If the goal is to help all students develop the needed skills and knowledge, then one aspect of the teacher's assessment responsibilities is to examine what students can do as a result of their units or lessons and to adjust instruction to meet the needs of students who are not getting it.

Some schools are finding that engaging teachers in collectively analyzing the reasons behind poor performance on a specific classroom assignment has a

powerful impact on the school community.

Having conversations about student work serves several purposes. It helps build common language and understanding about assessment, contributes to a greater collective vision of what a quality piece of work is so that teachers' expectations are aligned, contributes to seeing each student as a learner (understanding the thinking of a particular student), and focuses attention on analyzing why students respond the way they do to a particular task.

Check the following resources to learn how teachers can talk about the quality of work students are producing in their classes:

- *Looking at Student Work (A Window into the Classroom): A Video from Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Looking Together at Student Work: A Companion Guide to Assessing Student Learning* (1999), Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University
- *Listening to Student Voices*, a Laboratory Network Program project

The prime consideration in looking at student performance data of any kind is whether they actually represent the intended instructional goals, vision, or focus of the school. State test data are an important source of information for monitoring school improvement. However, student learning can be measured in other ways. Richer data are better data for school improvement purposes. Teachers in schools driven by standards often work together in developing end-of-unit assessments or common developmental rubrics that describe student progress on important skills. They realize that important skills such as those listed below need to be assessed across the curriculum.

- Applying content knowledge to solving new kinds of problems
- Analyzing and commenting on important issues
- Reading for information—reviewing and summarizing research
- Speaking in front of an audience and responding to questions
- Explaining a critical concept to someone else
- Using technology

Good classroom assessments created by teachers working together can lead students to develop thinking and reasoning, the kind of deep and critical skills that standardized tests often do not assess.

Teachers report that alternative classroom assessments (those other than simple, pencil-and-paper tests) personalize the learning process for students and help teachers understand students' thinking.

Schoolwide assessments in the form of graduation exhibitions or other public displays of student learning can inform discussions about where the curriculum needs to be strengthened. Senior Project is an example of a graduation exhibition that requires all seniors to complete a paper, product, and presentation on a topic of their choice for graduation.

Developing performance assessments from scratch can be overwhelming. However, these types of assessment are especially valuable for schools with low levels of student engagement as they often result in immediate improvement in student motivation. See more information on professional development in classroom assessment.

(3.) Establishing a Culture of Internal Accountability

In schools engaged in comprehensive

reform, teacher evaluation practices are consistent with a vision of the teacher as a professional. School administrators provide feedback to teachers on all aspects of their work: the quality of their planning, instruction, assessment, interactions with and impact on students, and contribution to the school community. Just as important, teachers analyze their own effectiveness and continually improve based on feedback from a variety of sources: students, parents, peers, and administrators. Questions like those below are commonplace in schools focused on a clear set of desired outcomes agreed upon by all teachers. Individual teachers reflect and act on them, and teams of teachers assist each other in changing instruction according to what they learn.

- What is the purpose of this lesson/unit and how does it contribute to student progress towards standards? What are the expected outcomes?
- What did students learn as a result of this lesson or unit? Can students explain why it was important to learn the skill or understand the concept?
- Were my expectations for students clear so that they were not guessing about what a quality product looks like?
- How could this lesson or unit be improved to reach more students?
- Which students didn't get it and how can they be helped without making them feel like failures? How can errors become part of the learning process instead of a punishment?

School leaders view teachers as professionals needing opportunities to work together to develop or fine-tune instructional materials, such as lessons, units, and assessment approaches. The leaders emphasize the importance of providing meaningful and challenging work for students to do. Resources,

support, and structures are provided to teacher work groups. Leaders are cognizant of the fact that the skills and confidence to take on this kind of joint analysis must sometimes be developed as the reform progresses.

Teacher evaluation systems designed in part to encourage professional growth (formative teacher evaluation) should require teachers to set professional growth goals and seek out feedback on their teaching. To complement the formative teacher evaluation component, a summative component should provide clear expectations for what it means to be a good teacher across a set of critical categories (planning, instruction, assessment, classroom management, impact on students, professional development, contribution to the school community). The summative process should engage teachers in presenting evidence of their performance in these categories to their instructional leaders or evaluators rather than just as passive recipients of a rating.

(See additional information on teacher evaluation in support of improved student learning.)

District staff who have a good understanding of state standards and best classroom practices can help teachers find or develop quality instructional materials. Some central office staffs in districts committed to comprehensive reform see themselves as service organizations providing technical assistance to the schools.

They are present in the schools; they problem solve with schools; they identify research and resources for schools; they help schools use time creatively to allow for collaborative planning among teachers; and they observe in classrooms and give formative (not performance appraisal)

feedback to principals.

It is important that schools engaged in comprehensive reform understand that the primary message of standards for schools is the clarity of purpose and attention to the learning of all students. Continuously improving instruction and assessment around clear goals and expectations for students is the school improvement process.

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An In-Depth Look at Nine Essential Components

UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSIVE REFORM

Component Five: Support Within the School

The program is supported by school faculty, administrators, and staff.

Introduction

The focus of Component Five is the importance of approaching a comprehensive reform effort from within a school culture that nurtures student, teacher, and administrator growth. As a roadmap to guide a school through this transformation, we draw from new research to outline the roles of district, principal, teachers, and staff.

The District Office Sets the Stage

Current studies show that teachers are the key to true reform and that this leadership role depends on district staff's ability to act as a service organization (Evaluation Brief, March 2000, p. 4) and a principal's ability to be a "leader of leaders" or a "teacher of leaders" (Nancy Mohr, private communication). Evidence shows "that structural reforms can work, but only when human and social resources are organized to provide particular forms of support for schools and students" (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995).

The fifth component of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) project reflects the widely held assumption (based on research, e.g., Fullan) that teachers and other stakeholders must buy into a reform if it is to work. Yet, in its recent evaluation of the demonstration and test stage of the New American Schools project, researchers from RAND learned that at the majority of sites, staffs chose a reform because "the principal wanted it; we got the message." Furthermore, most staffs were "looking for gain, not recognizing the effort needed to

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reform " (Bodilly, 1996, p. 314). So there is evidence that the New American Schools reforms that RAND is studying are taking hold despite the lack of initial understanding and buy-in. It must be noted, however, that those involved agree that implementation would have been smoother had there been more participant understanding at the outset.

How could this have been accomplished? Current research indicates district leadership is key.

The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) (1998) argues that it is the district leadership's role to create a sense of urgency for change. They insist districts will have to learn how to operate in new ways. For instance, CPRE researchers indicate that the district must provide the infrastructure to support and encourage the implementation of comprehensive school plans, including such processes as professional development, school improvement planning, teacher and administrator evaluation, and budgeting. In this way, school personnel perceive district leadership as valuing school change leading to improved student learning, rather than maintaining the status quo.

In its ongoing research that accompanies work with low-performing schools—both those receiving funds from the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program and its other improvement initiatives—the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction concurs with CPRE that reform-minded district leadership communicates "a compelling need to change." They identified districts "where both white and black students have made the highest gains in the state, regardless of percent of poor and minority students in the district." In these districts, they found practices similar to the nine components of comprehensive school reform, such as

- Focused and Strategic Planning: District goals and plans provide a framework for school improvement plans, which in turn are carried to the department and classroom level.
- Aligned and Pervasive Academic Focus: The written, taught, and tested curricula are consistent.
- Use of Assessment Information: Frequent and diagnostic use of assessment data (state and local assessments) is critical and is used to create a sense of urgency as well as to direct planning and instruction.
- An Empirical Basis for Practice: Instruction that

follows research-based practices is most likely to yield powerful results.

- Coherent and Consistent Professional Development: Professional development is based on long-term goals and research-based practice, builds school and district capacity, focuses on content and instruction, and is aligned with the overall direction and initiatives in the school and district.
- The District Staff as a Service Organization: Central office personnel in some of these districts see themselves as a "technical assistance team" to the schools.
- Flexible and Creative Use of Funding: Collaborative planning among schools and the district for use of categorical funds and personnel may lead to more efficient use of and greater impact from these resources.

The district provides the flexibility of resources, time, and structure for improving schools. And from this foundation, principal and teacher ownership emerges. "The purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance, regardless of role" (Elmore, 2000, p. 20). But once a strong district gives schools the freedom to learn and change in a collaborative manner, how does a principal build a culture that propels the school to continuous improvement? Or, if a district does not support and encourage reform, what can a principal who refuses to wait do inside a school? "[I]t is possible for middle managers [principals] to shape, if not create, organizations that they believe in, even in the midst of the nonrational world" (Fullan, 1997, p.10).

Districts have an important role to play in helping schools support change and helping teachers with reform efforts.

More successful schools and schools embodying more successful initiatives for school improvement possess greater degrees of cohesion and more collaborative structures. Teachers, principals, and central offices need to have an emphasis on "co-leadership." Schoolwide implementation of instructional and curriculum initiatives are virtually impossible without facilitation and support from the district. District offices not closely connected to teachers and schools are unable to create the conditions to support change (Joyce, Wolf, Calhoun, 1993).

One of the concerns of model developers has been

providing opportunities to service the remote areas. Jim Meza of Accelerated Schools said, "I feel, personally, that the district role and state role is just as critical as the designer, in terms of trying to service the remote areas. If we can build capacity at the state and district levels, too, we can begin a shared responsibility. If schools depend totally on the designer, schoolwide reform won't happen."

Districts could offer positive assistance to schools by taking the following actions:

- Address the needs and resources required for additional time and space to provide adequately for programs and activities.
- Research and develop plans to expand facilities to enhance the educational opportunities of all students. Creative and more flexible scheduling alternatives and better student-teacher ratios should be investigated to meet the diverse needs and interests of students.
- Examine "change of use" requests for noninstructional areas.
- Keep in mind that school boards must be brought along throughout the entire process. (Excerpted, with permission, from *State Education Leader*, Vol. 16, No.3).

The following links provide more information on the role of districts in support of comprehensive school reform:

- *EdWeek* article "Annenberg Task Force Will Take a Fresh Look at Districts"
- Education Commission of the States publication, *Progress of Reform*, information on district support
- Areas for the role of district support available in Appendix E
- Examples of the role some states and districts play in creating the capacity, vision, and commitment needed to improve schools
- A compilation of district profiles

The Principal as Teacher of Leaders

Another widely held assumption about the change process is that schools always have a few people who are the true believers, those who stay committed to a reform. According to this theory, the loyal group and the principal must spend an inordinate amount of their time battling resisters. However, this assumption was also called into question by

the RAND results. Bodilly (1996, p. 320) says that virtually everyone's commitment waned after the first few weeks or months. It was only as the development teams worked with the teachers, coaching and modeling, that commitment budded, developed, and thrived. This is what Michael Fullan (1997, p. 26) means when he advises, "start small; think big." A bias for action that leads to achieving high quality learning allows a school to show progress. Progress, or success, breeds success.

It is important to note that this phenomenon did not depend on the nature of the design. The designs in the RAND study are all very different says Susan Bodilly; yet "teachers were fairly consistent in what they felt was needed to promote changes, regardless of the design." Following is her list of the processes and activities that those involved said would get reforms off to a good start and continuously build commitment:

1. A compelling or at least clear introduction to the design written by the team and provided to *all* teachers
2. Relevant training provided to *all* administrators and teachers with behavioral changes or new processes modeled
3. Concrete materials and models to use in classrooms, committees, or other forums for reform
4. Presence of the design team members to help them or presence of a facilitator to aid in their understanding on a day-to-day basis
5. Teacher teaming to work on design issues or curriculum development
6. Participatory governance to ensure continued teacher support of the design
7. Teacher time for curriculum development, teacher-to-teacher interactions, and adapting to new behaviors (time for practice at the individual and school level)
8. Exposure to new ideas (1996, p. 320)

Katie Walter and Bryan Hassel's *Guide to Working with Model Providers* (2000) provides clear guidelines and tools for a school staff to set up the conditions for numbers one through three above. They stress (p. 15) that each party "make clear what it needs, what it expects, and what it can provide for the implementation of the model." They also provide other resources for selecting an appropriate comprehensive school reform model. Another tool to help district staff reflect on their key role in the support of comprehensive school reform and identify areas needing

improvement is Tool 1, District Self-Assessment Guide.

Other emerging research from the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program (CSRD in the Field) and the RAND study are building knowledge of the capabilities of different model providers so that in the future schools will be able to make better informed choices. There are distinct, rational steps to take as a school staff begins creating its comprehensive plan, but the issue remains of getting school people engaged and encouraging them to take leadership roles. Does the principal of a school successfully engaged in comprehensive reform have to be a visionary hero?

Dedicated principals are working against the grain, but current research indicates the new kind of principal's work is difficult but reasonable (Goldring and Rallis, 1993). Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker (1992) stress that changing schools is improving people, including the principal. Fullan (1997, p. 9) says leaders must craft their own theories of change and test them against their own experience.

> *Attention to the knowledge, skill, and professional development needs of principals has been a central feature of District #2 [New York City] strategy from its beginning some ten years ago• [These include] principals working in support groups and formal mentoring arrangements between more senior or highly skilled principals and newer principals or those who are judged by district administrators to need work in specific areas. Group meetings of principals in District #2 are focused almost entirely on instructional improvement issues and professional development. Monthly principals' conferences, for example, last all day; they are frequently held in schools and involve classroom visits and discussions of practice. (Elmore and Burney, 2000, p. 4)*

Ellen Goldring and Sharon Rallis (1993), reporting on their case studies of good schools, describe Lee, a "principal-in-charge":

> *Lee motivates, coordinates, and legitimizes the work of the teachers by taking a stand and then by manipulating time, space, resources, and personnel to enable them to join in moving toward that position. Lee does not*

> *empower; rather, Lee works to establish an atmosphere in which the teachers empower themselves to press for improvement and growth. (p. 37)*

It is important to note that their principal-in-charge does not empower nor does Lee "get teachers to do what it is that the principal wants and have them enjoy it at the same time." Instead, "the principals they studied were much less concerned with controlling what people did and how they did it and much more concerned with controlling the conditions that enabled others to function in ways that increased the likelihood shared goals would be reached" (Goldring and Rallis, 1993, p. viii). The leader's role is to ask people constantly what he or she can do to support their work—and then do it.

> *Almost every national reform advocate calls for the principal to enunciate a vision of the school and of objectives embodied in any new effort, in order to help teachers set priorities. As long as he or she doesn't deny obstacles and realities, such rhetoric can help everyone maintain commitment. Henry Levine describes this role as Îkeeper of the dream'. A principal's actions will be read very carefully as school change initiative proceeds. The principal who protects the faculty from arbitrary district rules or bends a few to help a project along will prove his/her commitment. The principal must model the attitudes the rest of the staff should adopt, learning new concepts to strengthen his or her understanding of effective curriculum and instruction along with everyone else (Zemelman, Daniels, Hyde, 1998).*

Richard Elmore (2000, p. 35-36) calls for a "redefinition of leadership, away from role-based conceptions and toward distributed views • large scale improvement requires concerted action among people with different areas of expertise and mutual respect that stems from the knowledge and skill requirements of different roles." Those at the top are dependent on those at the bottom. Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves suggest that true reform requires "trust in expertise and in processes of collaboration and continuous improvement" (1996, p.100) rather than a certain individual or the leader.

Further, the researchers talk about the importance of being

open to conflicting views (DuFour and Eaker, 1992, and Fullan, 1997). The successful school reaches a point where "the way we've always done it" or "the way we're most comfortable" is open to question. True collaboration, like sustained improvement, can be uncomfortable and risky. Since many schools are places "primarily devoted to management, not to learning—places devoted to order" (Ellis and Fouts, 1994, p. 21), principals and teachers have to be sure they are ready to undertake a messy, often confusing process. Following are questions to ask to gauge readiness:

1. Is everyone on staff "on the same page" about the need and direction for reform?
2. Is everyone involved in the process of exploring reform options and selection of the best approach?
3. Has everyone defined what this reform will look like in his or her classroom?
4. Have staff members discussed the time, space, and other resources their efforts will require?
5. Has everyone been given a responsibility for implementing some aspect of reform?

At its best, comprehensive school reform can become what J. W. Little calls "joint work," or the strongest form of collaboration. "Joint work implies and creates stronger interdependence, shared responsibility, collective commitment and improvement and greater readiness to participate in the difficult business of review and critique." She stresses that neither cliques, nor administratively imposed structures, nor mere conviviality constitute collaboration. These sorts of easy human interactions are present in most schools and do not contribute to fundamental change (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996, p. 47-57).

> In Rio Rancho, New Mexico, the 90 educators break into small groups known as "Critical Friends Groups" and Mr. Bass, Principal, indicates to the staff, who have been to so many workshops and talked about model programs and best practices, that they now need to "use ourselves to help ourselves grow."

Utilizing existing staff in new and critical roles, such as on-site facilitators, is emerging as an important part of the reform process. The facilitators "protected and maintained the integrity of the models" and often took the brunt of people's fatigue and frustration with all the change. It is

highly important, therefore, that the people chosen for these roles are skilled communicators and capable of inspiring trust of teachers. According to a building principal, the human factor can really make a difference in implementing a plan for reform. Interpersonal relationships are the key to staff buy-in; getting everyone to feel like part of the team makes the changes happen (Davis, Hagans, and Sagmiller).

Just as it is important—if teachers are to be the leaders of school change—to keep in mind that school improvement is about human dynamics, it is equally vital to keep in mind *why* a school is undergoing change. As Newmann and Wehlage (1995) indicate, preoccupation with implementation of a reform "often diverts attention from the more fundamental question: How is the new structural tool or practice likely to improve our school's human and social resources to increase student learning?" Improving human and social resources means being sure that relationships are authentic and founded on mutual respect and are not administratively imposed. Thus, students who are, after all, the reason for a school's existence, must be an integral part of planning and implementation, not just as passive recipients, but instead, as partners in improving their school and as people responsible for their own learning.

To facilitate student involvement in school improvement efforts, the national education laboratory network, in collaboration with K-12 school partners, conducted research into what happens when students are brought into the change process in meaningful ways. The Listening to Student Voices researchers developed four flexible self-study tools that go beyond including students on committees or inviting them to meetings. These researchers say, "[w]ith their unique perspective, students and students' school work can give a staff new strategies and new motivation for improving a school and learning." School staffs can learn more about these tools and decide how they might incorporate them (and their students) into their comprehensive plan on the website.

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Component Six: Parental and Community Involvement

The program provides for the meaningful involvement of parents and the local community in planning and implementing school improvement activities.

Introduction

This section highlights the research on parent involvement and provides strategies for moving from the traditional one-way communication type of involvement with parents and communities to the more substantial level of engagement that is needed to achieve the desired results for all students.

Why Is Parent Involvement Important?

The literature suggests that there is no single best way to encourage parent involvement—what seems to work best is for parents to be involved in *many* different roles over time. It is more important that parent involvement be well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting than that it take a particular form (Henderson, "The Evidence").

Family involvement is more than assisting children with homework or going to school activities; family involvement has many different forms and levels and is a collaborative effort involving families, schools, community and religious groups, and employers. Parents don't have to come to school to be involved. Family assistance at home affects children's attendance, achievement, and classroom behavior.

The most basic statement that can be made about parent and family involvement in education is that when it happens, everyone benefits. Three decades of research have consistently indicated that greater family involvement

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in children's learning is a critical link to achieving a high-quality education and a safe, disciplined learning environment for every student (U.S. Department of Education).

- The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status but the extent to which that student's family is able to (1) create a home environment that encourages learning, (2) express high, but not unrealistic, expectations of children's achievement, and (3) become involved in their children's education (Henderson, "A New Generation" 1).
- When there is a strong component of family involvement in school programs, students perform better than in programs with less family involvement (Henderson, "The Evidence").
- Home learning activities, such as reading aloud and frequent open family discussions, are associated with improved student achievement (Anderson, et. al.).
- When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behaviors (Epstein).
- Student behaviors, such as alcohol use, violence, and antisocial behavior, decrease as parent involvement increases (Bickel 13).
- In programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships, student achievement for disadvantaged children not only improves, it can reach levels that are standard for middle-class children. In addition, the children who are farthest behind make the greatest gains (Comer and Haynes).

See also:

- ED's *Strong Families, Strong Schools: Key Research Findings*
- NCREL's *Literature Review of School-Family Partnerships*
- Harvard Education Letter: Research Online. *Family Involvement in Schools: It Makes a Big Difference, but Remains Rare*
- Harvard Education Letter: Research Online. *Making the Connection Between Families and Schools*

Barriers and Misconceptions

Poor people care just as much about their children as middle-income families, but when they are asked to become involved without any power to make real decisions, they're

no more likely to become involved than others would be under those circumstances. However, if asked to become involved and given a chance to make a real difference in their school, they will respond in great numbers. They stick with it and begin making a difference (White-Clark and Decker 17).

Despite overwhelming evidence linking parent involvement and student success, a number of barriers and misconceptions still inhibit the involvement of many parents. Parents have a variety of reasons for not becoming involved, and those reasons should be considered before dismissing non-involved parents as uncaring or disinterested (Thompson 37).

Time. Time may be the most precious commodity that families need to support their children (White-Clark and Decker 13). With the rise of two-breadwinner families, single-parent families, and the need for family members to hold more than one job, many families are experiencing a time crunch. According to a national survey commissioned by *Hand-in-Hand*, approximately 69 percent of parents say it is "extremely important" for parents to spend time at home encouraging their children in schoolwork; however, 30 percent of parents report feeling frustrated because there often is not enough time to help children with schoolwork.

Uncertainty about what to do. Lack of knowledge about how to help cannot be equated with lack of interest. In general, most parents and family members are interested in their children's education and want to help them succeed. Unfortunately, many parents do not know how to translate their care and concern into positive involvement (White-Clark and Decker 7).

See also:

- NCREL's *50 Ways Parents Can Help Schools*
- National Parent Information Network's *How Can I Be Involved in My Child's Education?*

Other parents may have had bad experiences themselves with school and are reluctant to return to the school—even as a parent. More than 30 percent of parents say they find it difficult to help their children with schoolwork because "they teach things a lot differently from when I was in school." Twenty-one percent say they would be more involved if they knew what to do (*Hand in Hand*).

Cultural barriers. Increasingly, families in the United States are becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse. In many instances, English is not spoken or understood in the homes of immigrant families. As a result, family members may be reluctant to meet and talk with school officials. Those family members who do speak English but have limited education may have difficulty communicating with school personnel because their life experiences and beliefs are very different from those in the school community (Onikama, Hammand, and Koki 3).

However, language is not the only barrier to family involvement among culturally diverse populations. Salend and Taylor found that a prior history of discrimination also is a barrier to involvement. For example, many families may not attend activities or meetings at the school if they have experienced discrimination or disrespect there in the past (Onikama, Hammand, and Koki 5).

In the lower socio-economic class of the Hispanic culture, there is a heightened respect for the authority of the school and its teachers. As a result, people of this culture consider it a rude intrusion for a parent to enter the classroom. Unfortunately, many school administrators and teachers misinterpret this behavior as a lack of caring about the child's education.

See also:

- *Beyond Culture: Communicating with Asian American Children and Their Families Helping Young Urban Parents Educate Themselves and Their Children*
- *Increasing the School Involvement of Hispanic Parents*

Teacher attitude. Another factor that may contribute to poor parental involvement is teacher attitude. Teachers who have low expectations for poor children—or who believe that poor parents don't care about their children and don't want to be involved in their education—may consciously or unconsciously convey the attitude to parents that they have little to contribute when they do participate. When this happens, it is important that educators take a close look at their own misperceptions and attempt to discard these stereotypes (White-Clark and Decker 13). Click here for ideas to overcome obstacles to parent attendance and participation.

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Component Seven: External Technical Support and Assistance

A comprehensive reform program utilizes high-quality external support and assistance from a comprehensive school reform entity (which may be a university) with experience or expertise in schoolwide reform and improvement.

Introduction

Sustained implementation is dependent on the ready availability and high quality of external support for all nine components of a schools' comprehensive plan. Yet most model developers are not yet prepared to provide assistance for all nine components. This article provides ideas for possible relationships with external providers. It is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to serve as a catalyst to thinking creatively about what kinds of assistance a school might choose. In it the reader will find links to web pages that describe how schools (not necessarily Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration [CSRD] sites) are working with the following organizations:

- SERVE, the Regional Education Laboratory for Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina
- The SouthEast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium at SERVE
- The Eisenhower Math and Science Consortium @ SERVE
- The Region IV Comprehensive Assistance Center at SERVE, the Region V Comprehensive Assistance Center in Mississippi, and the Region XIV Comprehensive Assistance Center in Florida
- The National Center for Early Development and Learning, SERVE's research partner among the

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national research and development centers
- Representative institutions of higher education in the SERVE states

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The Regional Educational Laboratory at SERVE

SERVE is one of ten United States Regional Education Laboratories that assist in the implementation of comprehensive school improvement strategies by disseminating information through the World Wide Web, conferences, publications, training programs, and technical assistance. Following are examples of what SERVE offers in the Southeast.

World Wide Web

The School Development and Reform Program at SERVE maintains web pages devoted to the national CSRD project and the schools in its region. In addition, the reader will find many other resources dealing with different aspects of the nine components on the organization-wide SERVE website.

Conferences

Each year the SERVE Regional Forum on School Improvement brings together several hundred southeastern educators for two days of sessions organized around the different issues in school reform. Descriptions of the sessions are published on the SERVE website. In the 2000 Forum, these included

- Addressing the Special Needs of Children and Schools
- Family and Community Involvement
- Issues of Equity
- Leadership and Professional Development
- Leadership for Technology
- Literacy: Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing
- Meeting and Exceeding the Challenges of Standards and Accountability
- Migrant Education Technology

Publications

- Among the Regional Educational Laboratories, SERVE provides national leadership in the area of Early Childhood Education. SERVE's Children, Families, and Communities Program recently published an online report from the National Education Goals Panel entitled *A Report on Goal One: School Readiness*.
- SERVE annually convenes Teachers of the Year (TOY) from the Southeast. The TOYs came up with a profile of the kind of teachers America needs to move schools toward achieving the goal of higher quality student achievement.
- Several SERVE documents concentrate on literacy. *Reading: Southeastern School Strategies* highlights elementary schools implementing successful reading programs using a variety of techniques. *Leading Change in Literacy* focuses on two districts that overhauled their reading programs because instructional fragmentation was producing little student progress.

Work in the States

- In **Alabama**, SERVE is partnering with Cranford Burns Middle School in Mobile to develop a professional development infrastructure that allows teachers to collaborate for continuous improvement of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- The SERVE Assessment, Accountability, and Standards Program creates professional development materials for classroom assessment aligned with state standards. The **Florida** Bay District is a SERVE research and demonstration site. Together SERVE and the Bay District are improving teacher capacity to use classroom assessment for increased student motivation and deep understanding.
- The Teacher Dialogue Forum, created by SERVE, and the **Georgia** Partnership for Excellence in Education provide teachers the opportunity to learn about current research on teaching and learning and to share their views with one another.
- The SERVE Policy program has formed a long-term partnership with the North Bolivar School District in **Mississippi**. The SERVE resident team focuses on curriculum, leadership, and strategic planning. The effort is a source of lessons learned for schools and service providers engaged in comprehensive reform.
- SERVE's Senior Project staff works with schools in all six states—Polk County High School is one of these

schools. Another school in the network uses an online manual to explain its senior project to students and parents.

Regional Entities Associated with SERVE

- The Southest Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education @ SERVE is one of ten regional consortia. Its online newsletter, *The Common Denominator*, is a way for educators to learn what is happening in the Southeast.
- The SouthEast Initiatives Regional Technology in Education Consortium (SEIR•TEC) has recently worked with 14 resource-poor schools. The lessons learned in this work constitute guidelines for schools integrating technology schoolwide.
- The Region IV Comprehensive Assistance Center at SERVE assists North Carolina, and other states in the Southeast. It maintains an online reference tool for planning and developing lessons and units aligned with the South Carolina standards. The Region V Comprehensive Assistance Center in Mississippi serves Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. SERVE collaborates with both centers to facilitate training in Schoolwide Title I Strategic Planning. The Region V Comprehensive Assistance Center collaborates with SERVE on training in best practices for CSRD schools in Mississippi.
- The Region XIV Comprehensive Assistance Center contributes to SERVE's research study into the implementation of comprehensive school reform.
- The National Center for Early Development and Learning is another SERVE research partner. A recent online publication is *Enhancing the Transition to Kindergarten: Linking Children, Families, and Schools*.
- Other National Research and Development Centers address such topics as student learning and achievement, cultural and linguistic diversity and second language learning, and post-secondary improvement.

Higher Education

Following are examples of partnerships between K-12 and higher education in each of the SERVE states.

- In a collaborative partnership, faculty from the School of Education at the University of **Alabama** at

Birmingham (UAB) form two-person teams with Birmingham Public Schools teachers. The teams plan and teach together while developing and conducting research in the public school classrooms. In addition, every two years a different outstanding Birmingham teacher is selected to serve as regular full-time faculty in the UAB undergraduate teacher preparation program.

- The **Florida** League of Teachers is coordinated by the Center for Teaching and Learning at Florida State University and the Florida Department of Education. Recruited from among district, regional, and state Teachers of the Year, candidates for Technology Teacher of the Year, and other subject areas, award winners provide training for school improvement.
- The **Georgia** League of Professional Schools at the University provides a model and a network.
- **Mississippi** State University's Program for Research and Evaluation in the Public Schools promotes growth of educators and students through partnerships and research, instructional evaluation, and professional development. One hundred one of the 152 districts in Mississippi are in the PREPS network. The PREPS website is under construction as of November 2000.
- SERVE itself is an affiliated research center within the School of Education at the University of **North Carolina** at Greensboro. One of SERVE's current research projects is a study of implementation in a purposeful sample of ten percent of the schools in the southeastern states that received CSRD grants.
- The University of **South Carolina** has a network of professional development sites.

Information on activities and projects can be accessed from this list of universities.

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Component Eight: Evaluation Strategies

The program includes a plan for the evaluation of the implementation of school reform and the student results achieved.

Introduction

Program evaluation is often overlooked or data are collected in a hurried fashion by staff with little time or expertise. On the other hand, it is not unusual for staff to spend hours developing questionnaires and surveys and gathering data only to find the analysis leaves them with unanswered questions. This section will provide a quick and concise overview of program evaluation and greater detail about formative evaluation including some tools for developing evaluation plans. We begin with some definitions.

From Definitions to the Big Picture

Evaluation—Delineating, collecting, and analyzing data to provide information for making decisions. Program evaluation is a systematic process designed to determine the effectiveness of a particular program (whole program focus).

Formative Evaluation—Evaluation designed to gather data that will help improve a program during its operation (during implementation). Formative implementation evaluation generates information used to guide decision making about the program's desirability, feasibility, fidelity, and soundness.

Summative Evaluation—Summative evaluation involves the collection of data necessary for judging the ultimate success of the entire program.

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Triangulation—The idea of using more than one data source to confirm findings—to compare sets of data to see if the findings all are in agreement. For example, all teachers might have attended model-developer training (1), and the majority may ãself-reportä that they are, in fact, implementing the new strategies proposed by the model (2). Independent observers conducting classroom observations (3) may not, however, see evidence of meaningful change in classroom practice. Without this third data set, one might conclude that the strategies are, in fact, being faithfully implemented. If summative evaluation later showed no progress in student achievement, one might conclude that the strategies were unsuccessful, when in fact, they were never implemented to the level that research shows can have an impact on student achievement.

Benchmarks—A set of reference points between existing levels of conditions and expected levels or goals that serve as measures of progress toward the desired conditions or goals. For example, student performance benchmarks are specific achievement levels expected for a given group of students at given points in time. Teacher implementation benchmarks reference changes in classroom practice across the staff, over a period of time. If done well, the evaluation could not only show *where* teachers are with implementation but also provide data to understand *why* some are having difficulty, thus enabling individualized support to help them reach benchmarks.

Research—Obtaining generalized knowledge by contriving and testing claims about relationships among variables (narrowly defined focus). For example, a research study might focus on the implementation of a particular set of strategies and the obstacles faced by those trying to implement them. The findings would be of interest to anyone trying to implement the same strategies under similar circumstances. The research findings would certainly be of great interest to those who were studied, but would not provide *all* the data needed to track progress across the entire program. That is more within the scope of the Program Evaluation plan with both process (formative) and outcome (summative) measures.

Ongoing Research

National evaluation of CSRD efforts include the following:

- Examining baseline information

- Conducting large-scale longitudinal data collection
- Conducting focused studies of implementation and impact
- Looking at CSRD in the field through selected site visits and implementation reports
- Examining state and district data on local implementation

The federal CSRD legislation also mandates that state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) evaluate implementation and measure results achieved in improving student academic achievement. The state level evaluation of CSRD implementation and outcomes varies from state to state. Additional information on a particular state's evaluations of CSRD is available through the CSRD Coordinator at that SEA.

Schools and districts have at least two categories of evaluations:

1. Program implementation or formative evaluation
2. Student performance data or summative evaluation

Locally collected data should have a direct impact on the decisions made at the local level to revise and improve the comprehensive plan each year.

Reviewing Benchmarks—What, When, How, Who, and Why?

Evaluation consists of the following seven steps:

1. Focusing
2. Planning
3. Collecting
4. Analyzing
5. Reporting
6. Action planning
7. Finding and Using Resources

The steps constitute a feedback loop. Data drive actions; these actions are evaluated; data help refine the school's next actions.

Table 1 provides a set of first questions to ask in developing a useful evaluation plan, while Table 2 provides follow-up questions. A small group of school personnel and other stakeholders who are willing to look critically at the current evaluation plan may use these questions to begin

the process. It is desirable if some of the people in the group helped develop the current plan; some have already been collecting and analyzing data; and others are new to the process with less ownership in the previous/current plan. All should be committed to learning new things about evaluation and using data to drive reform.

A staff can use Table 3, Benchmarking Comprehensive Reform Initiatives, to benchmark initiatives and provide a timeline of key events in the implementation of the comprehensive plan. Table 4 will help a group set up measurable goals and objectives.

The following tools are designed to help staff members begin to think carefully about the purpose of evaluation and how they might develop a useful evaluation plan.

Because schools are not static, all planning and evaluation takes place in the midst of, even layered on top of, previous planning and evaluation efforts. If an evaluation plan has been developed and needs to be refined, staff can start by carefully reviewing the previously gathered data and the information they have provided. This will help determine whether some evaluation tasks should be dropped (they are not providing useful information) and whether some important aspects of program implementation are not being monitored.

Digging Deeper into Benchmarks

Table 5 focuses on benchmarks for changes in instruction and facilitates the examination of the data intended for collection to determine whether these data will actually aid in making decisions for improvement.

Developing Instruments, Analyzing, and Reporting Data

Issues in data collection are

- Selection or development of instruments
- Use of qualitative versus quantitative data

Data analysis issues include

- Matching the level of data analysis with the level of data collected
- Sample size and response rate
- Disaggregation of data

The following web publications provide guidelines for dealing with these issues:

An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) Program: Selected Profiles of Early State Implementation Efforts

Guidance on the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration literature database, especially *Step by Step, Evaluating Success*

Evaluating for Success (evaluation worksheets with examples) and *Evaluating for Success*

Developing Your School's CSRD Evaluation Plan: An Awareness Workshop for Local Schools and *Evaluating Whole-School Reform Efforts: A Guide for District and School Staff*

Evaluating Whole-School Reform Efforts: A Guide for District and School Staff , September 1999

Table 3 provides a review of various types of data collection and analysis methodologies.

Materials can also be found at NCREL's website, SEDL's website, and the CSRD web.net website.

It is a good idea to review these materials so that a school staff can select those that make sense to them.

Click here for a table that provides a review of various types of data collection and analysis methodologies.

Other Resources

Bernhardt, V. L. *The School Portfolio: A Comprehensive Framework for School Improvement.* Larchmont, NY, Eye on Education, Inc., 1999.

Bernhardt, V. L. *Data Analysis for Comprehensive Schoolwide Improvement.* Larchmont, NY, Eye on

Education, Inc., 1998.

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Component Nine: Coordination of Resources

Introduction

Comprehensive school reform provides the challenge and opportunity to examine long-standing practices in allocating resources. Money already allocated to a school can—and in most cases must—finance a comprehensive plan if it is to be sustained long enough to be fully implemented and institutionalized. So the process of reallocation starts at the very beginning, when school staffs create their comprehensive plans. This section provides suggestions and tools to assist school staffs dedicated to continuous improvement. It ends with ideas for more radical approaches to reallocation.

Taking Stock

District leadership is crucial in funding comprehensive school reform. While many states and districts give individual schools the authority for resource reallocation, schools in other states may be required to apply for waivers. Many districts have personnel dedicated to locating and applying for grants from governmental agencies, national and local foundations, and other local funding sources. Schools without these district services can set up a committee to carry out these functions.

Three categories of funds are available for financing school reform:

- Funds currently available to the school for operating expenses
- Federal funds, such as Title I
- Staff development funds, foundation grants, and special budget allocations from district or state sources (Odden, Reallocating, 1998)

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Table 1 is a form for researching a school's funding sources. Federal funds generally available to schools are shown in Table 2. Although federal funds may be awarded differently from state to state and from district to district, they are usually available to individual schools through district and state entitlement and competitive programs. A school staff in the process of comprehensive reform will want to tap into the expertise of those at the building and staff levels with knowledge of how the dispersion of these funds takes place in its district and state. Click here for U.S. Department of Education funding opportunities.

Private foundations and the business sector are also funding sources for reform. Newcomers on the educational foundation scene include Bill Gates whose foundation is funding teacher professional development, leadership and technological instruction for schools and districts, and district implementation of technological innovations. Gateway's foundation is providing online computer training to teachers. Former Netscape CEO James Barksdale created the Barksdale Reading Institute for K-12 literacy at the University of Mississippi with a $100 million donation. In December 1999, Goldman Sachs endowed its charitable foundation with $200 million devoted solely to education. Genentech, Honda, Target, United Airlines, and Walmart, among other well-known corporations, offer grants to teachers and schools. Click here for an all-purpose website for school staffs contemplating outside funding. Also see GrantScape's Grant seeking 101 for general advice on putting together a grant proposal.

In seeking private or government funding, it is important to be sure that the goals of the funding source do not overpower the school's comprehensive plan. If the funder's goals do not align with school goals, reallocating existing resources is better than bending and twisting a good plan just for extra funds.

Rethinking Existing Budgets

Schools typically have several budgets, each controlling finances for a part of school expenditures. The school bookkeeper and district finance office personnel are key resources for understanding a district's basic budget information. Yet reallocation takes more than knowledge, it also requires excellent communication because reallocating funds is often perceived as taking resources from one set of people and giving them to another. Obviously change becomes even more difficult when one's program seems to

be singled out.

We suggest the following guidelines:

- Be systematic and complete in gathering and analyzing information.
- Share all information with all stakeholders.
- Base all decisions on objective research findings—on fact and data— not just opinion
- Take the time needed for all stakeholders to understand the decisions.

In addition, difficult questions must be asked about each expenditure, including the following:

- How much of this expenditure is actually required by law?
- Does this use of money directly contribute to improving student achievement in this school according to our needs assessment?

After careful scrutiny and serious discussion among all stakeholders, budget allocations for items not directly contributing to the core functions of the school can be allotted to a pooled resource fund. The committee in charge of this function might begin recording these trade-ins in the first two columns in a document such as Table 3.

Additional Budgeting Links

- *Better Uses of Resources* by Allan Odden
- Consortium for Policy Research in Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, School Finance
- Consortium for Policy Research in Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's *Resource Reallocation PDFs*

Finding Time

Around 80 percent of most school budgets is allocated to staff salaries and benefits, so this is obviously a major source of funds. While all reallocation decisions must be approached in a systematic and careful manner, reallocating staff expenditures "faces special hurdles that others do not" (Odden). Even in this area, while they are all sensitive issues, some decisions are less controversial than others. If school staffs want extended blocks of time to study together without added cost, they might pool professional

development days to tack onto the beginning or end of the school year. While pooling days is less likely to pit one department of teachers against another, it still calls for a fundamental change in thinking. Here again, it becomes clear that the district is a crucial player in all comprehensive reform.

Reducing the number of students teachers are responsible for each day, quarter, semester, or year is a way to find time for teachers to think, collaborate, and plan. Reducing the number of electives and detracking are two ways to achieve this. When the number of electives is reduced, or if subjects such as mathematics or English are detracked, the result can be smaller classes for all teachers. Students can be more easily grouped; fewer constraints on enrollment in one class or another allows a staff to hold most classes to an average number of students. Issues to consider with regard to detracking or cutting electives include the (new) mission of the school, the number and demographics of the students who actually benefit from such programs (one cannot assume that all segments of a student population benefit from electives), and the possibility of using technology to enhance traditional teaching and learning. Some comprehensive school reform models call for reducing electives and/or detracking while others do not deal with these issues. And both options would be counter to the mission of still other designs.

Additional class size reduction links

- Coalition of Essential Schools' *One School's First Step: Changing the Schedule to Get the Numbers Down*
- SERVE's Class Size Research

Another way to reduce student/teacher ratios is for teachers in secondary schools to form interdisciplinary teams of, for example, four teachers. Each group of four is responsible for a cohort of 100 students for the whole day (or year). All four teachers are responsible for all 100 students for core content classes. Even with long blocks of time—for instance, 90 minutes for each content area—there is time left in the school day for students to take an elective or two and for teachers to work together to collaborate on their teaching and school improvement. In addition, each of the four teachers can be responsible for 25 of these same students as his or her homeroom or advisory students. If the school schedule is simplified enough (through decreased tracking,

a reduced number of electives, or other alternatives), the result is that each teacher is responsible for 100 students, far fewer than the typical teacher in the typical American secondary school. The Coalition of Essential Schools Fieldbook discusses several school designs and schedules. Elementary teacher teaming or looping can also reduce teacher loads.

Additional scheduling links

- J. Allen Queen and Kimberly A. Gaskey. Steps for Improving School Climate in Block Scheduling. *Phi Delta Kappan* v 79, p. 158-61 October 1997.
- Lois-Lynn Stoyko Deuel. Block Scheduling in Large, Urban High Schools: Effects on Academic Achievement, Student Behavior, and Staff Perceptions. *The High School Journal* v 83, no. 1, p.14-25, O/N 1999.
- Mark D. DiRocco. How an Alternating-Day Schedule Empowers Teachers. *Educational Leadership* v 56, no. 4, p. 82-4, Dec. 1998/Jan. 1999.
- Regional Multicultural Magnet School: The Looping Program
- SERVE's *Scheduling for Grade Team Planning in the Elementary School: A Formative Evaluation.*

In addition to classroom teachers and administrators, most schools have other staff including instructional, administrative, support, clerical, custodial, lunchroom workers, instructional aides, volunteers, and other personnel who provide services to students and/or teachers in the school. The reallocation committee can research the contributions of these staff members by asking

- Does this position contribute directly to the improvement of student performance?
- Is it essential to the operation of the school with the new mission?

Unless the answer is unequivocally "yes," this question follows: How could the resources funding this position be used more effectively? There are at least three possible responses:

- Redesign the position to reduce or eliminate non-essential or non-contributing functions.
- Reallocate the resources to a higher priority level.
- Reallocate a portion of these resources to fund two

part-time positions.

For example, an analysis of the staff of one elementary school showed that the duties assigned to five instructional aides did not significantly contribute to improved student performance. Therefore, the resources were reallocated to hire two additional teachers. However, such decisions do not always have to mean that a certain person no longer has a job; often the same person can fill a different position.

While eliminating non-teacher positions may at first seem like an easy way to find new money for teacher positions, there are cases when it has not proven to be the answer. When the staff at Central Park East Secondary School in New York City was organized, they decided that teachers would carry out all secretarial duties. This provided the small school with more teachers and the low teacher-student ratios they wanted within regular school budgets. However, after a time, they changed their minds. Teachers decided they needed a few people in the school, who did not deal directly with students, to answer phones and handle attendance and other clerical necessities (Paul Schwartz, private communication).

Yet relatively few school staffs have actually looked at how they spend their days. Reducing time spent on matters not directly contributing to improving student performance can open up needed time. However, objective and practical decisions to increase or decrease allotted time require actual data. These data can be gathered by conducting a Time Inventory as shown in Table 4. Once school staff begin this process, they can brainstorm ways to use time creatively.

Several educational organizations have rethought how a school might use its time; see The National Education Commission on Time and Learning's "Prisoners of Time," and the *Journal of Staff Development* article "Time: It's Made, Not Found." Additionally, David Collins (1997) suggests these ways to find time for professional development:

- Schedule special classes next to the lunch period to give classroom teachers extended non-contact time.
- Share extracurricular duties so that half the teachers are duty free at any given time.
- Dismiss teachers 30 minutes early two days per week to gain an extra hour on a third day.
- Use funds saved on substitutes to pay for extra

teacher days

Supplies, Materials, Furniture, Equipment, and the Physical Plant

The committee can also analyze the budget for supplies, materials, furniture, and equipment. If there are sufficient numbers of these items for the next year's operation, the money could be reallocated. In addition, expensive remodeling can sometimes be avoided by taking an inventory of space available in a building or buildings and changing the classroom configuration. Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7 can be used to inventory these resources.

Radical Reallocation

Most of the tools and concepts in this section provide ways for staffs to think incrementally about changing the way they use their resources. Also, earlier in this section we gave an example of a school staff that took responsibility for clerical duties to use the money for lower student-teacher ratios. In this case, the experiment did not work as first planned. However, the last thing we would want to do is discourage staff members from trying well-researched, but radical, new ideas. To the contrary, we encourage educators to dare to completely rethink how their schools function.

We advocate moving from "leaving it alone so adults will be happier" to "making a change to improve student learning." For instance, you may want to rethink even your partnerships to better serve a revitalized intellectual focus. In Clover Hills, Washington, they decided that an organization with which they had collaborated for years could use the time and energy of its staff to provide student tutoring instead of providing clothing for needy children. After initial discomfort, the result is "a flourishing partnership that directly benefits student learning." (*Program Report: Proceedings of the CSRD Strand of the Education Now and In the Future Conference* October 30-31, 2000, Portland, Oregon. December 2000, p. 8. NWREL.)

It may pay a staff to rethink how they evaluate the cost-effectiveness of a given innovation. For instance, a cost-benefit analysis of New York City's small schools "revealed them to be an excellent value" because the analysts looked at the cost per *graduate* rather than per student. (Research Shows Small Schools Offer Big Education Returns, pp. 4-6 in *School Improvement Report.* Vol. 1, No. 3. June 2000.) It behooves a staff to ask, "What is the purpose of our school

anyway?"

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